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## A Backward Look.



Mrs. C. E. Bamford.



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A review of the annual reports of the Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society of California for the last quarter of a century, leaves the impression upon the mind that not all of the hard mission work has been done by our missionaries on the foreign field; some of it, at least, has been done by our faithful mission workers at home. This unbroken history gives us a glimpse of the labor, the faith, and self-denial of the pioneer women who organized this Society. They not only organized, but they carried the Society forward until it gained the confidence of the churches, of the missionaries, and of the Missionary Union. The formation of this Society was due, largely, to the efforts of Rev. and Mrs. Gates, of San Diego, and of Mrs. Thorndike Jameson, of Boston.

The Society was organized on October 14, 1874, at the First Baptist church, San Francisco. Mrs. T. Jame-

son was elected president, but as she declined to accept the office, Mrs. B. S. MacLafferty became the first president. Mrs. F. M. Conro was elected corresponding secretary, Mrs. D. K. Woodbridge recording secretary, and Mrs. M. E. Wattson treasurer. Nine ladies were placed on the executive board, Mrs. J. C. Ayers, Mrs. I. S. Kalloch, Mrs. C. F. Davis, Mrs. C. P. Garthwaite, Mrs. A. R. Cogswell, Mrs. Heath, Mrs. E. B. Hulbert, Mrs. C. T. L. Dam and Mrs. S. Hilton. The founders of the society desired that all of the Pacific Coast churches should unite in this work, therefore an effort was made to secure the co-operation of the ladies of Oregon, Washington Territory and Nevada, as well as all ladies in California who were not already represented in the Society.

Before the close of the first year, Washington Territory allied itself with the organization, Nevada sent an individual contribution, and the new Society was officially recognized as an auxiliary of the Missionary Union. The first annual report shows the work accomplished in foreign lands was the support of one Bible woman in Ningpo, China, and assistance in the erection of a building for the school under the care of Mrs. Arthur and Miss Kidder in Tokio, Japan.

The second year, Oregon joined the organization and materially aided in increasing the receipts of the treasury. But some did not understand the aims of the new mission society. It is recorded that a Baptist sister in Oregon had repeatedly stated that the mission circles were political gatherings, but after attending one of the Associations of the State, and finding that the circles were working to save the heathen, this sister came forward with tears in her eyes, and said, "I want to do some-

thing for that cause." Then she made her offering, and gave her name for membership in a circle.

For the first eight years of the Society the principal work accomplished was in supporting native children and Bible women at various stations, also aiding mission schools in foreign lands and forming Bands and Circles upon the Pacific Coast.

At length Oregon and Washington Territory withdrew from the organization, and in 1883 the California Society stood alone, as it had done the first year. It had long been the earnest desire of the Society to support a particular missionary, who should represent it upon the foreign field. On entering into correspondence with the East upon this subject, the Missionary Union requested the Society to assume the support of Miss Skakle, a lady already stationed on the Congo river, Africa. At this time, of the 107 churches of California, there were but 20 churches identified with this Foreign Mission work, but a boy was being supported in China, a girl in Rev. Bunker's school in Burma, a Bible woman at Swatow, China, and the Society made itself responsible for Miss Skakle's salary, at \$500 per year. It required faith and also work to maintain this first missionary. But for four years Miss Skakle was supported as the Society's representative in Africa.

Miss Skakle's interesting letters were read in the circles and in other missionary meetings, and to help in keeping up an ardent zeal in regard to that far-away land, Miss Skakle at one time in 1889 sent the Society a box of African curiosities. Much interest was taken by the Circles in these mementos of "darkest Africa." Especially were the ladies amazed when they saw the heavy brass rings worn as ornaments

by the Congo women. One brass anklet weighed two pounds, and a brass neck ring was nine pounds in weight. Miss Skakle found four or five forsaken black children that she mothered, and tried to Christianize, and kept from starvation. She proved herself to be a most faithful Christian missionary. During the fourth year that she represented the Society, Miss Skakle married Rev. Mr. Billington, an English missionary on the same field. Soon after this it was deemed wise that the Society should sever its connection with Mrs. Billington, and send out a lady from this coast, to a country nearer home, as China or Japan. It was with sincere regret that Mrs. Billington was given up, for all had become deeply interested in her work on the Congo. As Mrs. Billington died the next year, doubtless God's hand was in this change of missionaries.

Rev. J. S. Norvell and wife, soon after this, offered themselves as missionaries to China. After due consideration and much prayer these well-known and well-equipped missionaries were accepted, and in January, 1889, Mr. and Mrs. Norvell sailed for China under appointment by the Missionary Union, our Society pledging their support. A few months later, Miss L. Adele Phillips, of Los Angeles, desired to go as missionary to Japan. Miss Phillips was an earnest worker, and after taking a special course of study, she was sent to Senzai, Japan.

In 1890, Miss M. K. Scott, daughter of Mrs. Dr. Scott, desired to join her mother in Swatow. Through the generosity of our lamented Mrs. E. H. Gray, of Oakland, the Society assumed Miss Scott's support, Mrs. Gray contributing the salary.

Thus in less than two years, four missionaries were sent to the foreign

field, and it was with gratitude that the ladies reviewed the prosperity of the Society. But disappointment awaited them, for in June, 1891, Mr. and Mrs. Norvell were obliged, on account of Mr. Norvell's failing health, to lay down their work in China and return to California. The return of these faithful missionaries necessitated the making of new appointments.

Through Rev. J. Sunderland, Rev. J. H. Scott and wife, of Washington, were secured as our next missionaries. The appointment by the Union was made in 1892, and they sailed for Japan with the understanding that the California Society should meet the expenses so far as possible. For a time Mr. and Mrs. Scott were assisted in Osaka by Miss Phillips, who had become by this time somewhat familiar with the Japanese language. The next year Miss Phillips became by marriage Mrs. Neitz, and tendered her resignation. Miss Mattie Walton, of Washington, was soon, in 1893, sent out to Osaka to take the place of Miss Phillips. Miss Walton proved to be a most faithful missionary, a true helper of our other missionaries in Osaka, and she was permitted to remain with them for several years. It was with the deepest regret that, at length on account of declining health, Miss Walton was obliged to return to the Pacific coast. For seven or eight years the efforts of our Society have been concentrated upon the Osaka field. Osaka is one of the most important cities in Japan, and the reports of our missionaries promise as good results in the future, as in the past. It is believed, however, that if the present work is to be maintained in that city as it is at present, a lady helper should soon be sent to assist our missionaries in their arduous duties.

A review of the records of this Society for the last twenty-five years shows that between \$33,000 and \$34,000 have been raised for missions during this time. The Society has been interested at various times in from fifteen to twenty different foreign stations. It has contributed toward the excellent Home for missionaries' children at Vashon Island. Through the Bands and Young People's Societies three Christian Japanese girls are being educated and trained as future workers among their own people. One of these girls, however, graduated the past year, and is now assisting Mrs. Scott in Osaka. In 1885 the Bureau of Intelligence was established, Mrs. Cogswell, superintendent. In 1886, the Society was incorporated under California laws. In 1875 there were but eight Circles reported, while in 1899 there were eighty-six Circles reported in the minutes, besides the reports of Bands, Intermediate Societies and Juniors.

During these twenty-five years 162 laides have been made "life members" of the Society. The Society has had eleven different presidents. Their names are as follows: Mrs. B. S. MacLafferty, Mrs. S. B. Morse, Mrs. J. P. Cogswell, Mrs. C. S. Capp, Mrs. H. Huntsman, Mrs. P. W. Dorsey, Mrs. A. W. Runyan, Mrs. B. Spencer, Mrs. C. M. Hill, Mrs. R. E. Beach, Mrs. J. Sunderland. Two of these presidents have served for two terms each, namely: Mrs. MacLafferty and our present able president, Mrs. Sunderland. All of these presidents but one, Mrs. Capp, still survive. Other officers have been loyal and true, some serving the Society for a long term of years; as Miss Clara Hull, who was recording secretary for seven years; Mrs. C. F. Davis and Mrs. Beach for three years

each; Mrs. C. Thompson for six years; also Mrs. William Fraser and Mrs. Esterly for a shorter period. The arduous office of corresponding secretary was also held by Mrs. G. S. Abbott for eight long years. Mrs. Conro held this office for four years, Mrs. L. P. Huntsman and Miss Mary E. Bamford for three years each, and our present efficient corresponding secretary, Mrs. Bridges, for nearly four years. The responsible office of treasurer was held in a meritorious manner for thirteen continuous years by Mrs. B. C. Wright, who saw the funds increase from less than \$500 the first year, to \$3,814.96 the thirteenth year of her labors. This sum is the largest amount collected in any one year since the organization of the Society. The names of our three faithful treasurers since Mrs. Wright resigned, and Mrs. Resseguie, Mrs. J. J. Warner and our present worthy treasurer, Mrs. G. W. Fraser. Fraser.

And what shall we say more? for time would fail us to tell of work done by the Associational and District Secretaries of the state; of the labors of Miss Lillian Berger, Miss Vickroy, Miss Minnie Ham, and Mrs. Malliet, among the Bands and Juniors, or of Mrs. Sawtelle's, Mrs. Hill's, Miss Berger's, or Mrs. Featherstone's and Mrs. Coulson's work as state solicitors for the Helping Hand. Then there is a long list of worthy helpers, whose names would fill pages, who have labored faithfully and have obtained a good report, some of whom are no longer with us, but are among the crowned ones, gone before to their reward.

It is impossible to report all that has been accomplished by this Society, because much work done cannot be recorded. The Society has had its days



of prosperity and its days of adversity. What patient, faithful, prayerful hours the various boards of directors have spent in planning, devising, letter writing, speech making and otherwise directing the work of this Society so successfully is only known by our Heavenly Father and by those in close contact with these ladies for many years.

Time will not permit us to speak of the arduous labors of our recording and corresponding secretaries, of the numerous letters written, and long annual reports made out; or to tell of the treasurer's headaching battles with figures, or to report the receptions given by our reception committees, Mrs. Gear, Miss Mary A. Ham, Miss Florence Ford, and others to our missionaries or the heartfelt prayers offered to our Heavenly Father during the existence of this Society. Yet twenty-five years is but a youthful period, a commencement. God grant that the annals of this Society at the mature age of fifty years may show much greater progress, and may the rays of the Gospel light have then penetrated into every dark corner of this earthly globe.

Let us enter the next quarter of a century with a firmer trust in God as our helper and leader. For encouragement let us claim this promise as our own, "In due season we shall reap if we faint not." Doubtless the workers of this Society will sometime rejoice with joy unspeakable, when in that heavenly land, they shall meet heathen souls washed in the blood of the Lamb, and saved through the instrumentality of the Woman's Baptist Foreign Missionary Society of California.

621 East Fifteenth Street, East Oakland, Cal.